

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS
Custer STAR Academy
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2005-2006**

Team Members: Donna Huber and Barb Boltjes, Education Specialist and Dave Halverson, Transition Liaison.

Dates of On Site Visit: November 14 and 15, 2005

Date of Report: November 15, 2005

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Surveys—parent, teacher and administrator
- State needs assessment

Meets requirements

Referral documentation is included in each student file for those students referred during January 2004-January 2005 school year. There were 4 teacher referrals and 1 parent referral. Custer STAR Academy

staff's analysis of student performance on assessments drives ongoing development and training in the areas of curriculum and instruction for general and special education personnel. General education input was available in 11 of 11 files reviewed.

Validation Results

Promising practice

Custer STAR Academy (Brady Academy, Youth Challenge Center, Living Center) use outside resources to provide various unique educational opportunities for their students. The Academy works with the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology through an engineering project, field trips provided in conjunction with the National and State Parks system and provide opportunities for students to attend Custer High School. Custer STAR Academy invites outside specialists to present programs such as an assembly on mountain lions, artist in residence and other cultural events.

The monitoring team noted a high degree of collaboration between special education staff, regular education staff, DOC staff and administrative staff.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with areas identified as meeting requirements for Principle One, General Supervision.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Federal guidelines
- Education policy
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Meets requirements

Special education services are provided to all students who are eligible for special education services. Services meet state and federal requirements. Feedback from parents, current students and staff is used to improve services.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees Custer STAR Academy youth receive special education services at no cost and concluded a feedback system from current or exiting students has been established.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for

eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- File reviews
- Parents rights brochure

Meets requirements

Informed parental consent was available in all files reviewed. In 6 of 6 student files reviewed STAR Academy provided the parents written notice five days prior to proposing or refusing to initiate or change the child's identification or evaluation. Prior notices contain all required content. In 6 of 6 files reviewed, parent input into the evaluation process was acquired through questionnaires. All tests are administered in the child's native language. All tests administered by STAR Academy show all are adequately standardized and valid. All tests are administered by qualified individuals per the requirements established by the test producers. Functional assessment was administered in 6 of 6 files reviewed. Transition evaluations were conducted for 6 of 6 students prior to turning 16. Copies of evaluation reports were sent to the parents either with the prior notice or with the IEP. There has not been a request for an IEE. The MDT report was available in the files of 6 of 6 students. The MDT report documented all required content.

Needs improvement

4 of 6 evaluations were completed within 25 days after receipt of signed consent in files reviewed. One did not have a signed consent form, the other was delayed due to functional assessment not being completed. Functional assessment information was summarized in 0 of 6 records reviewed.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with areas identified as meeting requirements for appropriate evaluation as concluded by the steering committee.

Needs improvement

Through file reviews, the monitoring team noted files reviewed since the onsite technical assistance visit by the team leader and transition liaison, consent for evaluation was documented and the 25 day timeline was met. The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee finding, evaluation timelines and signed consent need continued improvement.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- File reviews
- Prior notice forms

- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- Parental rights document

Meets requirements

Parent rights brochures and prior notice/consent contain all required content. Consent was obtained in 4 of 6 files reviewed and consent for initial placement of services was obtained 1 of 1 files reviewed. No parent has revoked consent. The comprehensive plan procedures address the appointment of surrogate parents and procedures for disclosure of student information. In 12 of 12 files reviewed, a record of access and types and location document were present in the files. The comprehensive plan has procedures for parents to inspect and review records, to receive copies of educational records and regarding disclosure of personally identifiable information and procedures for amendment or destruction of records. FERPA information is mailed to the parent/guardian on an annual basis. STAR Academy provides copies of the IEP and other records at no cost to the parent. There has not been a parent request to amend records. No complaints have been filed with the special education department in the past seven years. The comprehensive plan has procedures to follow when a due process hearing is filed. There have been no requests for due process hearings within the past seven years.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting the requirements for procedural safeguards as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- File reviews
- Prior notice
- IEP forms

Meets requirements

In 12 of 12 files reviewed, written prior notice was given 5 days prior to the IEP meeting. All students attend their IEP meeting at STAR Academy. A copy of procedural safeguards is sent each time prior notice is given to families. In 11 of 11 files reviewed, a transition assessment was completed and used to develop the IEP. No interpreter has been needed for an IEP meeting.

12 of 12 files reviewed, the IEP team include the required members. A copy of all goals, objectives and modification pages are provided to each teacher in the education team. All teachers have access to the student's education files. In 8 of 11 files reviewed, 3 arrived after the annual review date. In 6 of 6 files reviewed, IEP meetings were held within 30 calendar days of the receipt of the evaluation results. In all files reviewed, teacher input was requested from the student's teachers.

In 11 of 11 files reviewed, 8 were reviewed on or before the previous IEP. The other 3 files were out of date on arrival at STAR Academy. In 12 of 12 files reviewed, a copy of the IEP was provided to the parent. 12 of 12 files reviewed documented the beginning date of service to be as soon as possible after

the IEP was developed. In 12 of 12 files reviewed, documentation of progress in achieving goal and objectives was present.

Validation Results

Promising Practice

Custer STAR Academy provides information via a form on procedures necessary for transfer of parental rights to a student at age of majority. The checklist includes contact information for parents and students to access resources necessary to transfer rights.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting the requirements for individualized education program as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- File reviews
- IEP form

Meets requirements

In 12 of 12 files reviewed, the specific education program (goals and objectives) were developed prior to concluding placement on the continuum of least restrictive environment. STAR Academy uses the mainstream model with all of the students. Students needing increased teacher to student ratio can be placed in the Learning Center. This is not only for special education students, it also has regular education students needing increased assistance. 12 out of 12 IEPs reviewed considered potential harmful effects when determining placement.

15 of 20 educators surveyed indicated they received adequate training, information, and supports to implement IEPs. 15 of 20 educators indicated there is enough time available during the school week to complete necessary tasks (i.e. meetings, modifying curriculum, consulting, etc.) 16 of 20 educators surveyed indicated they have opportunity to provide input in to the development of the student's IEP. 18 of 20 educators surveyed indicated they modify, and adapt curriculum to meet the needs of students. Due to the nature of the different programs at STAR Academy, curriculum modifications and creative instructional approaches happen on a case by case basis when the opportunity allows.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting the requirements for least restrictive environment.